

## Hope and School Leadership for Elementary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify how first-grade students in one Midwest state cognized hope. Using a case-study research method, the authors identify recommendations for practice that draw on the alignment between developing hope in students through school leadership. Previous research has highlighted school leadership's significant role in multiple pathways for student success. This study demonstrates that young children can cognize abstract topics such as hope and presents ways educational leaders can support student social-emotional well-being in the daily curriculum through hope education.

**Keywords:** hope, hope education, agency, autonomy, school leadership,

Educators have searched for ways to increase student success in schools and prepare students for future success. After the pandemic caused by COVID-19, there has been an increased focus on students' social and emotional needs. This emphasis was long overdue as research has shown the social-emotional needs of students—specifically, that their need for hope is vital (O'Shea, 2020; Marques, 2011; Marques et al., 2015; Kwon et al., 2015). Through hope comes the understanding that we can control aspects of our lives through personal effort. According to Sheehan & Rall (2011), “Hope, then, becomes our capacity to clearly conceptualize goals, develop strategies to reach our goals, and initiate strategies and sustain the motivation to achieve those goals” (p. 44).

School leadership is not removed from hope education. School leadership has recently been described as one of the most influential components of a school (Grissom et al., 2021), and school leaders' roles require more than managerial tasks. Educational leaders also support teachers' and learners' development, both academically and emotionally. By supporting teachers in their understanding of cross-curricular connections, educational leaders can help remove barriers their teachers may face when incorporating social well-being into a seemingly concrete curriculum. While hope as a construct might seem removed from the proverbial plate of educational leaders, we argue that given their multitudes of roles and impacts (Zuckerman & O'Shea, 2021; Grissom et al., 2021), hope should be considered a core component of any vision for a school. We believe educational leaders are situated such that coalescing hope education with other core competencies is paramount for student and educator success. In fact, Kwon et al. (2015) explain that hope is associated with concepts we can safely assume are valued by most administrators, including lower anxiety, lower depression, and greater academic performance.

The primary aim of this study is to understand how young students cognize hope and how educational leaders can support teachers in weaving the concept of hope into their settings. Utilizing Snyder's Hope Theory (1995), the authors look to understand the following questions better:

1. How do first-grade students cognize hope?
2. How does hope differ between individual students?

## **BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

As Sebastian et al. (2017) and Grissom et al. (2021) explain, a principal's impact on student performance can be complex and multifaceted. Some have a stronger relationship with student achievement than others, which “suggests that the specific mechanisms through which leaders try to influence learning matter considerably” (p. 90). We believe that one salient path could be hope. Snyder et al. (1991) define hope as “A positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (p. 287). We see both paths in Snyder et al.’s (2018) schematic of feed-forward and feed-back functions involving agency and pathways of goal-directed thoughts in hope theory. However, measuring hope can be difficult, as Rose and Sieben (2018) state, due to the diversity of the human experience and differences in the nature of individual goals. While the generalization of findings can be substantial, students are separate beings and will process, understand, and enact concepts differently.

As described in Synder and colleagues’ (2018) framework, student agency and developing pathways play a crucial role in hope development. According to Snyder’s Hope Theory (1995), people with hope can set goals with agency thinking and create multiple pathways to reach those goals. They are also motivated to continue efforts even when obstacles are put in their path. As educators are planning lessons and professional development opportunities, it is imperative to keep these paths in mind. Principals can reference these pathways when mentoring or providing teachers with feedback. This constant integration demonstrates to a teacher that hope is more than just a buzzword but a clear vision for the school. From this demonstration, educators, including principals, can work in tandem to find ways to use the above definition to promote student agency through hope education.

As components of hope, student agency and autonomy require clear distinction. The collaboration and focus on hope rests on the conception that student agency is distinct from student autonomy. Student autonomy is the ability to make informed and uncoerced decisions (Gilbert, 2015). Alternatively, student agency is much more nuanced as it requires the learner's motivation, disposition, and positionality (Vaughn, 2021). For example, a teacher can give students autonomy by allowing them to pick a topic of interest to study. Though they are given space to make the decision, it does not mean they have the motivation to complete any type of assignment or the disposition to feel as though they can complete the assignment. Nor does it mean they have the positionality to place themselves in a frame in which they see the necessary variables from lived experiences to think the assignment will be successful. Hope education can then be incorporated into each subject area, helping increase emotional well-being and student agency to succeed when given autonomy (Synder et al., 1991). For teachers to do this, however, requires their autonomy to deviate from scripted lessons and not fear retaliation (McLeod & Shareski, 2018).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools, which corresponds with hope education, as Owens et al. (2022) points out. The authors explain that SEL is defined as a process of acquiring skills to regulate emotions to achieve goals. This skill acquisition requires time and repetition, which there never seems to be enough of. Principals, in this case, must not only support the vision of hope education in their buildings but also support teachers as content experts in their setting, providing autonomy to make decisions (O’Shea, 2021). Though the literature on hope, in general, and hope for school leaders, in particular, is especially scant, Lopez (2007) highlights the importance of “encouraging autonomy, modeling a hopeful lifestyle, promoting strengths-based development, and telling stories about how students and educators overcame big obstacles to realize their important goals” (p. 42).

## **METHODS**

### **Context**

The context of the study is provided to help the reader gain a more holistic understanding of the process the authors followed to understand the construct of hope in schools. Additionally, the authors include contextual research on school leadership and the actions taken by the administration in this study. This outlines the interactions of research and practice to allow the reader the ability to make decisions for their own setting. Though the main focus is on the teacher's actions in the classroom, the work's genesis could not occur without a relationship of trust between the teacher and principal. The research protocol for this study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The study was conducted in accordance with their ethical principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants via their parents prior to their participation, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process.

The school's makeup highlighted the opportunity for excellence due to the presence of multiple backgrounds, experiences, and generational knowledge. This Title I school hosted 343 students, with 28.3% White, 23.0% Hispanic,

20.4% Asian, 13.7% Black or African American, 12.8% claiming two or more races, and 1.8% American Indian or Alaskan Native. Also, 87.5% of those students participated in the free and reduced lunch program. A large group of English Language Learning (ELL) students represented 35.9% of the student population. The special education population comprised 14.9% of the total student population, and the gifted population comprised 4.1% of the school. There was also a high mobility index of 0.247, meaning 24% of students moved in or out of their homes during the school year. The consideration of student heterogeneity was significant in the research design and the process of understanding how students cognized hope.

The Midwest elementary school had a school improvement (SIP) team that used Gallup student survey data to guide their future goals. The team immediately noticed an unfortunate trend while analyzing the survey results from past years: As students grew older, they began losing their sense of hope. Using the Gallup Hope Index, the SIP team saw this decrease in hope among all kindergarten through fifth-grade students continue each year. In 2013-14, students were 74% as hopeful as those in U.S. elementary schools. In the 2014-15 school year, students were 59% as hopeful; in the 2015-16 year, our students were 51% as hopeful. Each year, the same six survey items (shown below) from the Gallup Hope Index were presented in Likert scale form. Students had five response options: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*.

1. I know I will graduate from high school.
2. There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.
3. I can think of many ways to get good grades.
4. I energetically pursue my goal.
5. I can find lots of ways around any problem.
6. I know I will find a good job after I graduate

The SIP team met monthly, and this topic of hope continually resurfaced. Each month, the team would sit and stare blankly at one another, silently willing someone to speak up with an idea. Each school year faded into the next as they continued to discuss the problem without a solution, and the concept of student hope was slowly swept under the rug year after year.

Finally, the SIP Team decided to complete a book study on *Making Hope Happen* by Shane Lopez (2013). The most important lesson learned was that hope could be taught. The team was energized and excited about focusing on hope. They decided to formalize it as a school improvement goal.

From the leadership perspective, the principal in this building utilized a distributed approach (Spillane et al., 2004) in allowing their teachers to take the lead on this school-level issue. The principal did not micromanage the situation and tell the team exactly what was needed or how to make things happen once they were agreed upon. Instead, the principal facilitated, helped garner ideas, and allowed their staff to lead the change. This distributed approach has been shown to increase teacher capacity (Spillane et al., 2004) and bolster teachers' use of innovative teaching practices (O'Shea, 2021) through increased autonomy. We see that teachers require precisely the same autonomy that students require for hope to facilitate innovation and decision-making. While single administrators can utilize multiple schemas of leadership to meet the needs of their staff (Zuckerman & O'Shea, 2021), the use of a distributed approach to leadership here allowed for the SIP team to feel empowered to investigate a construct that was often viewed as "soft-science" and inapplicable to student success. This element is key to the success of developing a culture of hope in a building. Top-down mandates are rarely successful in school settings (Fullan, 1994).

## **STUDY DESIGN**

This qualitative study used a case study research design with Snyder's Hope Theory (1995) as the theoretical framework. This was done as it remains the most comprehensive and applicable framing for studies of hope.

The case investigated was hope among first-grade students in one classroom in a Midwest elementary school. Creswell's (2002) descriptions of qualitative research were used to gather information (e.g., interviews and photographic analysis) to develop a detailed explanation of the study. This case study research model combined photographic analysis (Figure 1), author-generated open-ended interview questions (Figure 2), Gallup Hope Index Likert scale surveys (Figures 3-6), and analytic memos to inform an a priori thematic and categorical coding scheme (Miles et al., 2018). More than 20 observations were conducted throughout the year to maximize the opportunity to collect data on the students' understanding of hope. We iteratively analyzed the coded data for emergent themes and patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018), triangulated data sources to

ensure the depth of evidence for each theme, and identified and included disconfirming evidence (Miles et al., 2018). Findings were reviewed for validity internally through peer review (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **Participants**

Four students from a first-grade classroom were selected for this research study. Due to the intimacy of the constructs, a small sample size of students was intentional to allow for more time to understand their personal views and ideas of hope. Their classroom teacher, the primary researcher, had a prior relationship with the students, which helped ensure students felt comfortable sharing openly and honestly. As a teacher-researcher, the primary investigator must consider the bias created toward each student as their classroom teacher and help alleviate any issues that might arise. All students were given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The following pseudonyms were given to the participants: Luke, Cassie, Jasper, and Mary. In the following section, we present some of the salient findings from the investigation.

## **FINDINGS**

### **How Do First-Grade Students Cognize Hope?**

Examining research question one, we found that first-grade students can comprehend deep, meaningful topics, including hope—especially when it is put into context. This is based on the finding that each student cognized hope through their own personal, contextual lens. This is in line with the research of Snyder (1995), who explained the importance of agency and creating pathways for goal attainment. Three out of four students understood hope throughout most of the interview, and their understanding increased during conversations. The students provided meaningful examples of hope and explained the difference between hopeful and unhelpful situations. For example, Luke explained that a flower growing out of the cement was unhelpful because “he don’t want to be there, because a car might run it over.” His explanation was quick and matter-of-fact.

Similarly, Cassie explained that the flower was hopeful in that it “was hoping for no more cracks and hoping it won’t get run over.” When asked to elaborate, she also explained that it might not be too hopeful because “it might turn out a little bit bad” because the flower will eventually get run over, but a new seed might be there to replace it. Cassie went on to explain how a picture of a mother holding her baby showed hope because “she’s hopeful she will have a safe place to live . . . and that she has to hold tight to the baby so it won’t fall like a baby bird.” These intricate examples undergird the finding in that they help elucidate the thought process of children. Hope is fluid but highly impacted by previous schemas, like having a safe place to live or how important it is to take care of yourself.

Another finding was that students need direct instruction and examples to connect the concept of hope and the context of their own lives. All the interviewed students struggled to develop examples of hope from their own lives when they did not have any additional prompting. Three out of four students displayed a solid grasp of the topic during continued discussion. All four were able to provide meaningful examples pertaining to their future lives.

A third finding was that the students cognized hope through their own personal context lens. Their sense of hope differed based on their ability to connect personal life experiences and the concept of hope. Not only did students process hope differently from each other, but their ideas of hope changed and evolved as the interviews went on and multiple examples were discussed.

A fourth finding was that students may express an understanding of hope and yet still struggle with the skill of setting goals and creating achievable pathways to reach those goals. Students had an impressive ability to discuss the topic of hope within the context of their own lives and the examples of others. However, frequently, these students could not exhibit hope as a cognitive process in their everyday lives. Simply put, students were successful in expressing what hope was in their own lives and identifying it in additional examples when prompted but struggled to put these understandings into action when presented with difficult situations. It is clear that we need to teach students hope as a goal-directed cognitive process (Snyder, 1995) because they will benefit from it academically (Marques, 2016) as well as psychologically (Marques et al., 2016).

### **How Does Hope Differ Between Individual Students?**

When considering research question two, we found that students learn about hope by connecting new information to their prior knowledge. Students continually showed this throughout the interviews, especially during the photo-interview portion. In Figure 1, Luke mentioned that the man was waiting for a taxi to get home. He made this connection because he takes that

taxi to school each day. He even began talking about how he gets to school in the middle of answering questions about this picture. In this same picture, Jasper explained that the man wants to go to work, but the bus is going to be late. He made a connection with something that had happened in his life or something he heard adults discussing. He knew adults must go to work, and this man looked like he was in work clothes. He knew adults needed cars to get to work, and this man looked upset, so he must have wished that he had a car to go to work. Jasper even mentioned the possibility of a break-up between the man and his wife, which may be why he doesn't have a car anymore. "He had a wife, but they broke up. So the wife, the girl, went with the car, so now he doesn't have a car," Jasper suggested. These concepts are not common knowledge; he had to build this knowledge through life experiences.

Cassie answered similarly to Jasper, as she also thought the man was going to work. The difference in her answer was that she thought the man was waiting for the bus, but the bus was late, so he would get fired. Maybe someone in her family takes the bus to get to work each day, and they have talked to her about it being late. Mary's answer was very different from the first three students. She made the connection that he must be upset because his friends were making fun of him. She connected to the man on more of a personal level. She has likely witnessed friends making fun of others or possibly making fun of her, and she knew that it could be upsetting. When she saw this picture, she had to consider why this man might feel the way he did. When she thought about feeling upset, her first thought was that people feel sad or mad when their friends make fun of them. We see that the construct of hope differs between students based on their contextual understandings and experiences.

**Figure 1**

*Image Used to Portray Hope*



### **How Can Educators, Including School Leaders, Support Hope Education?**

Research question three examines what educators, including educational leaders, can do to support hope education. As school leaders look to identify specific school-wide goals and strategic plans, considering hope education might serve as a strong lever for multiple forms of learning. Educational leaders can help develop these pathways for student success as early as first grade by establishing a school-wide focus on hope. This study found that momentum for hope education required a supportive principal who allowed the SIP team to advance their interest despite competing top-down mandates. The primary researcher followed the work of Lopez (2007) by promoting the autonomy of her teachers by investing time in staff meetings for the SIP team to discuss steps they were taking to establish buy-in and momentum for other teachers. She worked with staff to model a hopeful lifestyle by being mindful of the ratios of interactions (the number of positive interactions compared to the number of negative interactions with students.) within the building. The simplicity of the intervention was not lost on her or the students. From these findings, we present the following practice recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

### **Recommendation 1: Teaching About Hope Should Include Student Background Knowledge**

Students need connections to make sense of their learning. Each child will make different connections based on prior knowledge and life experiences. This can be explained by Schema Theory (Rumelhart, 1980), in which students organize new learning and information based on what they already know relating to a particular topic. It is also supported by Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction (1965), in which he expresses the importance of stimulating prior learning recall to help facilitate students' learning process. When we are teaching about hope, educators need to be able to provide students with as many connections as they can. We also need to allow students to make those connections themselves. The use of photographs is a great way to enable students to share what they are thinking. Teachers can then use student thoughts to build on the concept: the more connections, the more learning and understanding.

### **Recommendation 2: Teaching About Hope Should Include Context and Examples**

This recommendation is based on the finding that students need direct instruction and examples to connect the concept of hope with the context of their own lives. From the interviews, we found that it was more difficult for students to answer abstract questions about hope compared to questions about hope that included context. This finding is intuitive as it can be difficult for adults to define certain abstract concepts. The idea of providing students context goes hand-in-hand with making connections. Asking students, "What does hope mean?" and "How do you know someone has hope?" yielded unsure answers full of misconceptions. However, when students were given an example and asked, "Does this show hope or not show hope?" They were able to provide a clearer answer and justify it with reasons specific to the context of the example. Through these examples, they gained a better understanding of how hope can look and feel.

Academically, teachers use examples because rational sequences of examples and non-examples better facilitate concept learning (Tennyson, 1975). To teach first graders, one often begins by providing students with a definition of a concept. For example, "When you add, you are putting two number partners together to make a total." A teacher might have students repeat the definition together and repeat it to a partner. However, it is well established in education that memorization doesn't equate to a deeper-level understanding of the concept. The work of Webb (1997) describes this framework as Depth of Knowledge (DOK). The corresponding layers are associated with lower and higher levels of cognition to arrive at the answer. A DOK level 1 asks students to solve based on recall or regurgitating what a teacher has already explained. In contrast, a DOK level 4 requires students to use extended thinking, which requires complex reasoning and synthesis. Because of this, the teacher's job becomes to *show* students rather than *tell*. One strategy is to include students in an active learning narrative to increase the number of learning modalities involved in the learning process. For example, a teacher may ask, "If two students are learning by reading books [teacher directs two students to walk to the classroom library and begin reading a book] and three other students are learning by drawing pictures [teacher directs three additional students to sit at a table and begin drawing], how many total students are learning in the classroom?" In such a scenario, students can listen to the story and visualize the narrative, leading to deeper comprehension of the concept.

The use of examples is not a novel teaching method, but the key is understanding that we can *also* teach hope by using examples. Hope is not just wishful thinking. It is a process of setting goals and creating pathways to reach those goals even when obstacles arise (Snyder et al., 1991). We need to provide students with real-life examples and non-examples so they can determine what hopeful behavior truly is.

### **Recommendation 3: Teaching About Hope Should Include Skill Practice**

This recommendation is based on the finding that students may be able to express an understanding of hope but still struggle with the skill of setting goals and creating achievable pathways to reach those goals. For example, Luke struggled in the classroom with social, listening, and problem-solving skills. However, if he were asked the meaning of a kind friend or a good listener, he would have no problem answering. Similarly, if he were asked about ideas to solve a particular problem, he would likely be able to answer quickly and thoroughly. His actions and words may not show hopeful behavior, but in his interview, he could express a clear understanding of what it means to be hopeful. This highlights that Luke has attained an understanding of the concept of hope. However, he still needs skill practice. Continued analysis of this connection between the understanding of the concept of hope and the skill demonstration showed the beneficial connection between teaching the behavior and the skills to enact.

Many students who struggle with school behaviors can use their words to explain what it means to follow teacher directions. However, in the moment when they are asked to complete an undesirable task, it is often difficult for them. Because of this, teachers know that students must practice and transfer the skill into real-life situations. For example, if a student is struggling to follow the directions to clean up after independent work time, she could meet the teacher on the carpet to discuss the expectations and then practice. The practice could consist of the student physically taking out materials and beginning to work, followed by the teacher asking her to stop, clean up, and joining the teacher on the carpet. The student and teacher could practice this routine several times “outside of the moment” so that the student could develop a sense of control of such situations and be able to display the desired behavior, along with positive reinforcement, within the moment. With this type of practice, students are more likely to be able to respond to teacher directions in the future successfully.

This type of repetition highlights the idea that hope is a cognitive process that can be learned (Lopez et al., 2000). The goal of learning is to apply what is being learned to real situations, so this learning must involve applications and take place in an authentic context (Brown et al., 1989). An example of this includes a physical activity that first graders highly enjoy during recess time: the monkey bars. Students *hope* they can cross the full length of monkey bars without falling, *hope* that they can cross the expanse of the bars by skipping alternating bars, and even *hope* they can cross the expanse backward. To teach these students about hope, the teacher could engage the class in a discussion about using the monkey bars, and then they would need to go outside to the playground and practice. Would they all accomplish their goal on the same day? Absolutely not. But hope is about continued effort—even when things are difficult. As simple as it may seem, such a lesson includes skill practice that can show students a real-life example of setting and attaining a goal while providing them with context to understand hope.

#### **Recommendation 4: Teaching About Hope Should Include Teaching Self-awareness**

This recommendation is based on the finding that students may lack self-awareness of their own sense of hope. We want students to be able to think about their own hope behavior metacognitively and to do this; we must raise student self-awareness. Student surveys showed an array of understanding and thinking about themselves. Cassie and Mary agreed with most of the statements they were provided, whereas Luke and Jasper seemed to answer more critically of themselves. If we want students to understand hope, we also need them to assess their behavior and thinking processes accurately. When we view hope as a cognitive process (Snyder et al., 1991), we also need to teach students to develop metacognitive skills to monitor and evaluate their progress (Dirkes, 1985).

One way to promote self-awareness is to teach students the reflection process. Teachers understand the importance of first modeling and then incorporating a gradual release of responsibility. As viewed by video clips, students could be given examples and non-examples of hopeful behavior. Then, the teacher could utilize a teacher think-aloud so that the students can hear the thought process as the teacher reflects on the levels of hope shown in the examples. From here, the teacher could invite their students to view more examples and have an opportunity to reflect by themselves. The use of the happy face rating scale (Figures 3-6) would be beneficial to keep the process simple and concrete for students. After completing their scales, students could openly discuss as a class and provide explanations for each of their ratings. During this conversation, the teacher would have the opportunity to check for student understanding of the concept and address any misconceptions or misunderstandings.

#### **Recommendation 5: School Leaders Need to Foster a Culture of Hope**

This final recommendation is based on findings from a breadth of research on school culture and principal influence (see Grissom et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021; O’Shea, 2021) that school leaders have significant impacts on the culture of a school. The findings of this study show how educational leaders’ sway can support or repress teachers’ application of the above recommendations. An educational leader could foster a culture of hope by following the work of this study and developing a leadership team to help cultivate their own study of hope in their setting. From there, they could continue to build on the work of Freire (1970) in book studies and continue to value the voices of students and the community in their schools. For educational leaders, hope and autonomy must be intertwined—not just for students but for staff. High school leaders can also benefit from this work as students increasingly lose hope as they age but are also looking for more “non-traditional” career pathways. Helping students and staff see the benefit of a cognization of hope would allow more instruction time dedicated to “non-core” but essential topics such as hope.

## Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to understand hope in elementary students and build off this work to understand what educational leaders can do to help integrate it into the everyday curriculum. Follow-up questions to this study include: *How can we increase hope among students who are feeling hopeless?* and *What is the best way to provide elementary students with the tools they need to remain hopeful throughout their lives?*

Future research should focus on creating a hope intervention curriculum and include measuring student levels of hope before and after the intervention. This research would need to be measured for reliability and validity, and the survey questions would need to measure the construct of hope accurately. Further studies may include collecting longitudinal data to follow students throughout their academic and post-high school careers. It would be beneficial to gather information from students as they become adults to investigate and assess their use of goals and pathways throughout their lives and their ability to overcome obstacles they may face.

Additionally, separate interventions could be conducted at the elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. Eventually, the interventions could grow to include a school plan, including staff and community members. Curwin (1992) insightfully stated, “Hopeful attitudes by students begin with hopeful teachers and administrators. Before students can learn to be hopeful, they must interact with hopeful professionals on a daily basis” (p. 30). Studying hope should go beyond one classroom. We need to investigate this concept at a larger scale by including all stakeholders interested in student success, including teacher perspectives and understandings of hope.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include a small sample size. This study was designed to learn about a specific case in a first-grade classroom. As a case study, it did not seek reliability, validity, and generalizability in the same way that more traditional research methods require. However, there are ideas and experiences one might find transferable to their own research or practice.

The surveys and interviews used in this research study relied on self-reported data from young students. Consequently, there is the possibility of inaccuracies or inconsistencies. Because of this possibility, multiple forms of data were gathered, including observations, surveys, and interviews. However, the research's accuracy cannot be fully verified or validated.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study affirm the importance of hope and hope instruction as an educational tool. The results suggest that teaching young students about hope can help them develop agency and envision a more hopeful future. In conjunction with the findings of this study and the incredible influence educational leaders have on student outcomes, we implore educational leaders to see students as more than a grade and to do more than hope that social and emotional teaching is occurring in their schools, but to work with teachers and community to make it happen for all students.

These findings are well suited for practitioners interested in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) concepts and how leadership can serve as a conduit for the work. The findings continue the conversation about the importance of hope education and add to the literature in that young students should not be omitted from the conversation. In many instances, “soft skills” such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) are not considered necessary components of a child’s education. Without the backing of educational leaders, many students and teachers will miss out on well-documented and indispensable learning opportunities that could otherwise be provided.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Figure 2**

*Interview Questions: The Meaning of Hope*

1. What is hope?
2. What makes you feel hopeful?
3. Can you tell me about a time that you had hope?
4. What do you hope for in your life now and for your future?
5. Who do you know that is a hopeful person and how do you know they have hope?

**APPENDIX B.**

**Figure 3**

*Self-Concept Survey Questions*

<b>Student Questions-HOPE</b>			
<b>Self-Concept</b>			
1) I believe in myself.			
2) I feel important.			
3) I think I can learn a lot.			
4) I am good at a lot of things.			
5) I am a good friend.			
6) I think people like me.			
7) I can succeed in school.			
8) I know a lot of things.			
9) I always do my best.			
10) I like myself.			

Figure 4

Trust Survey Questions































<b>Trust</b>			
1) I have lots of friends that I can ask for help.			
2) My friends are always nice to me.			
3) I trust my friends.			
4) My teachers always help me do my best.			
5) I trust my teachers.			
6) My teachers care about me.			
7) My family teaches me things that are helpful for my life			
8) My family takes care of me.			
9) I trust my family.			
10) I can trust people in my community.			

Figure 5

Resilience Survey Questions





























































<b>Resilience</b>			
1) I always keep trying even when it's hard.			
2) I will never give up.			
3) If somebody says I can't do something, I work my hardest to do it anyway.			
4) I have to work hard to do my best.			
5) I can be okay even if there is a problem.			
6) If some kids didn't want to play with me, I would play with others.			
7) If I make a mistake, it is okay.			
8) Even if people say mean things to me, I can be okay			
9) If I'm not good at something, I will keep trying.			
10) If there is a problem, I can think of a way to solve it.			

Figure 6

Future Aspirations Survey Questions

<b>Future Aspirations</b>			
1) I will graduate high school.			
2) I will have a good job.			
3) I will be a good person when I grow up.			
4) I will have a happy life.			
5) I can make a change in the world.			
6) I will have a happy family.			
7) I will always do my best in my life.			
8) I can be anything I want to be.			
9) I will always have friends.			
10) I am excited about my future.			

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